

MOVIE

MAKER

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TO CINE

**EXTERMINATE!
EXTERMINATE!**

Dr. Who – an amateur epic

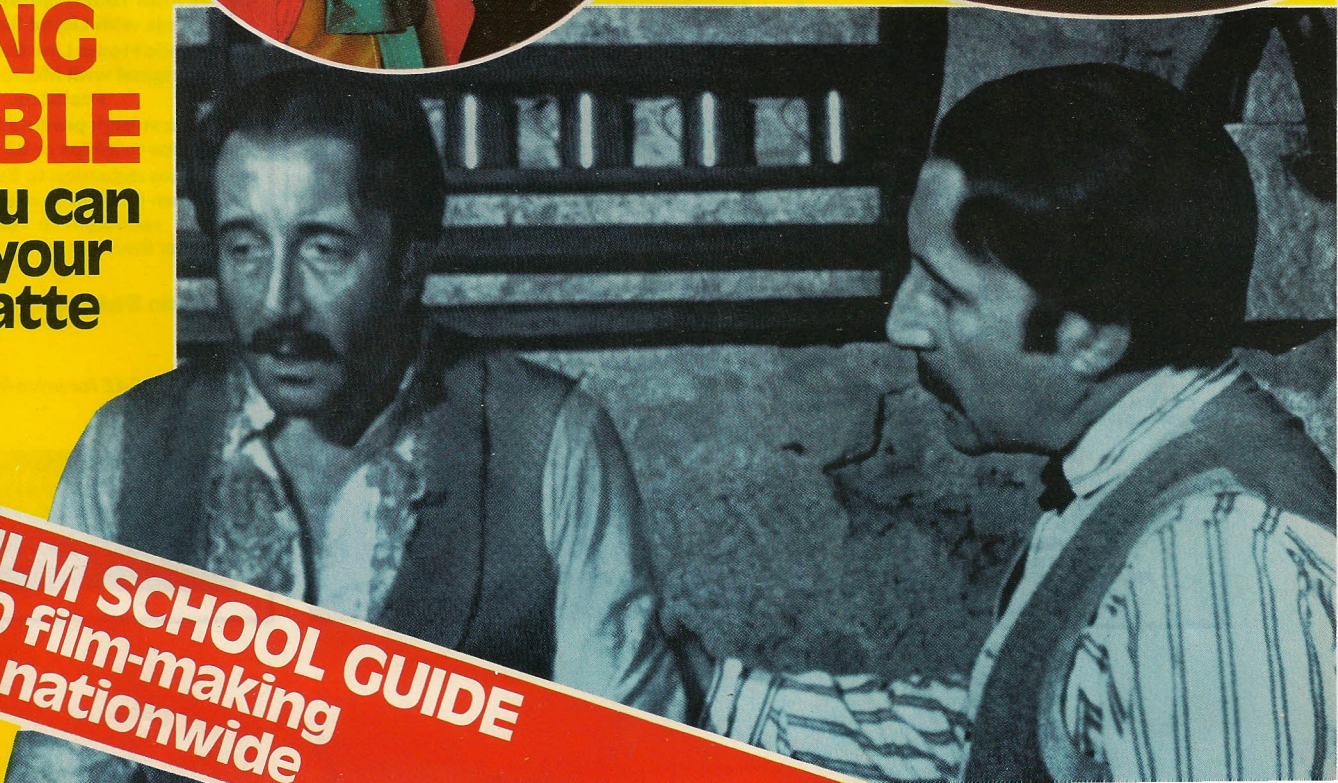
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In the annals of amateur film-making, how many people I wonder can have spent five years of almost solid work in making a film, have considered spending up to £10,000 on it, can have planned on producing a feature length epic, or can have seriously envisaged taking on the professionals in terms of production values and quality throughout? I don't suppose very many.

But for the last five years, just such a project has been underway in the normally sane South London suburb of Wimbledon. Here two young men have been working in all their available spare time, spending all their available money and throwing all their energies into making a full-length Dr Who adventure. Julian Vince and Paul Tams are apparently both perfectly sane people. However, they have put so much effort into this project as to appear positively fanatical. Why, I wondered, if you are going to go to such creative lengths, why not produce something totally original? Why Dr Who?

TOTAL BOREDOM

'There are several reasons', says Paul. 'Julian and I met when we were both in our late teens at a meeting of the Dr Who Appreciation Society. At the time, there was film group in the society, who produced a two-hour movie called *Oceans in the Sky*. This was greeted at a Dr Who convention with total boredom, because all it consisted of was the Doctor and his companion being chased around the Kent marshes by a group of very tatty looking Daleks. Thanks to this, amateur film had a pretty bad name in the DWAS, so we decided that we'd

David Wilford meets Julian Vince and Paul Tams, two men with a mission

show them. We felt we could do much better, and had the idea of making an amateur film to professional standards.

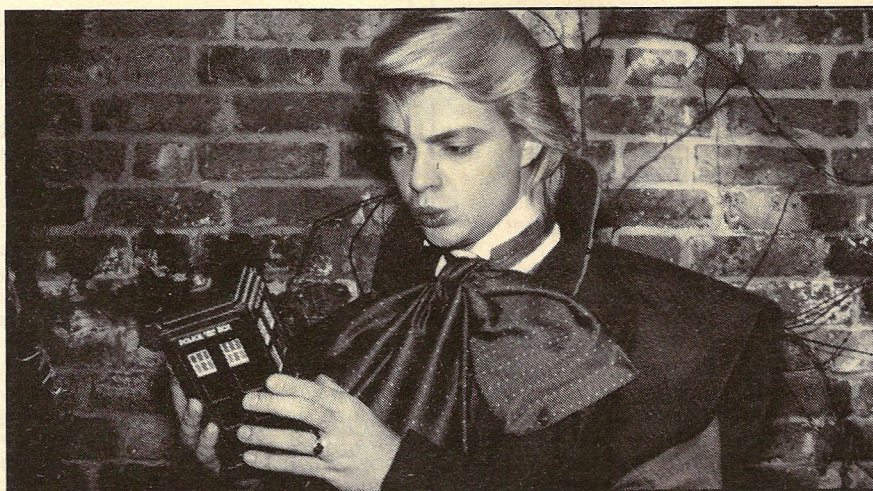
'We ourselves made a film called *The Image Makers*, which had a very Jon Pertwee-like Doctor, and a K9 character. But we knew that we could do better than this as well, and when Julian went to art school, he started to build decent props.'

A 'REAL' DALEK

'Yes', adds Julian, 'Four years ago, I started to work out the dimensions of a Dalek. I wanted to make a 'real'

Dalek, not just something that looked like one. This took me a year, but now I know the design off by heart. I built four to start with, and these took a year to build. They're pretty tatty by now, because I made them out of cardboard mostly, with fibreglass heads and necks. The lumps on the sides are made out of ping-pong balls cut in half — I used to be a *Blue Peter* fan as well! But you wouldn't believe how long it took me to get those ping-pong balls painted just right. I've got twenty Daleks now', he adds with pride. 'I've made most of them with vacuum foaming or out of fibreglass though. Much easier and stronger.'

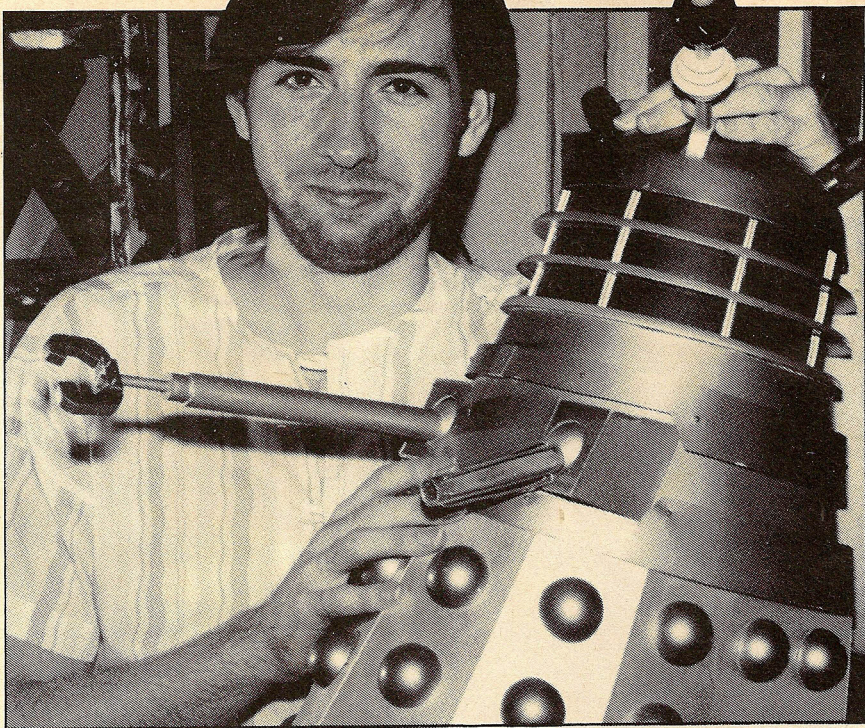
Paul Tams, as the Doctor, admires the eight-inch model of the Tardis.



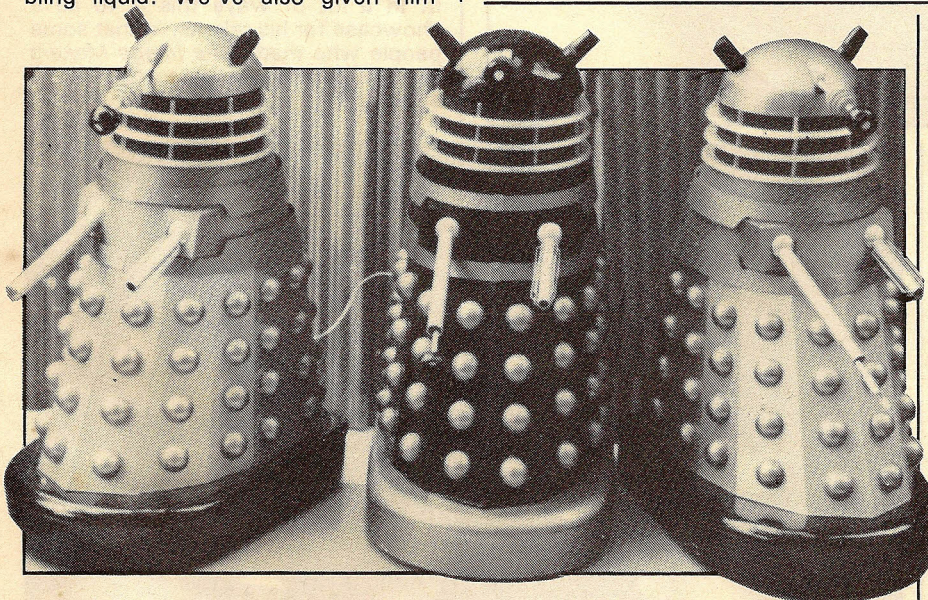
COMPLIMENT

Julian hasn't spent all his time building Daleks though. He's also created a number of model sets, invented weird and wonderful machines, created a totally new life form — the Corven — and has of course built a Tardis. 'We were hoping', says Paul, 'to avoid having to build a full-size Tardis, but we had to make so many different walls for it that in the end we went on and made the whole thing.' They have been paid the ultimate compliment, in that the BBC Dr Who cast have now borrowed their Tardis to use in a panto in Southampton. Accolades don't come much bigger than that!

The idea of creating a new life form is an interesting one. How did they set about it? Paul: 'The Corven is a sort of bloated frog-like thing. We made him out of latex, and decided that rather than just obviously put a guy inside the frog suit, we'd try to rationalise it, and design it along scientific lines. Therefore, we thought about how it might breathe — for instance, it obviously couldn't breathe the Earth's atmosphere, so we gave it tubes coming out of its skull and going into its neck. These are constantly full of bubbling liquid. We've also given him



Julian Vince poses with one of his 'children'. He took a year to work out the dimensions of a 'real' Dalek.



'I've got Daleks at the bottom of my garden.' Three two-foot tall models.

pupils that contract, we've made him able to sweat, he's got slime coming out of his mouth — we've generally made him kind of athsmatic-looking.'

MECHANICS

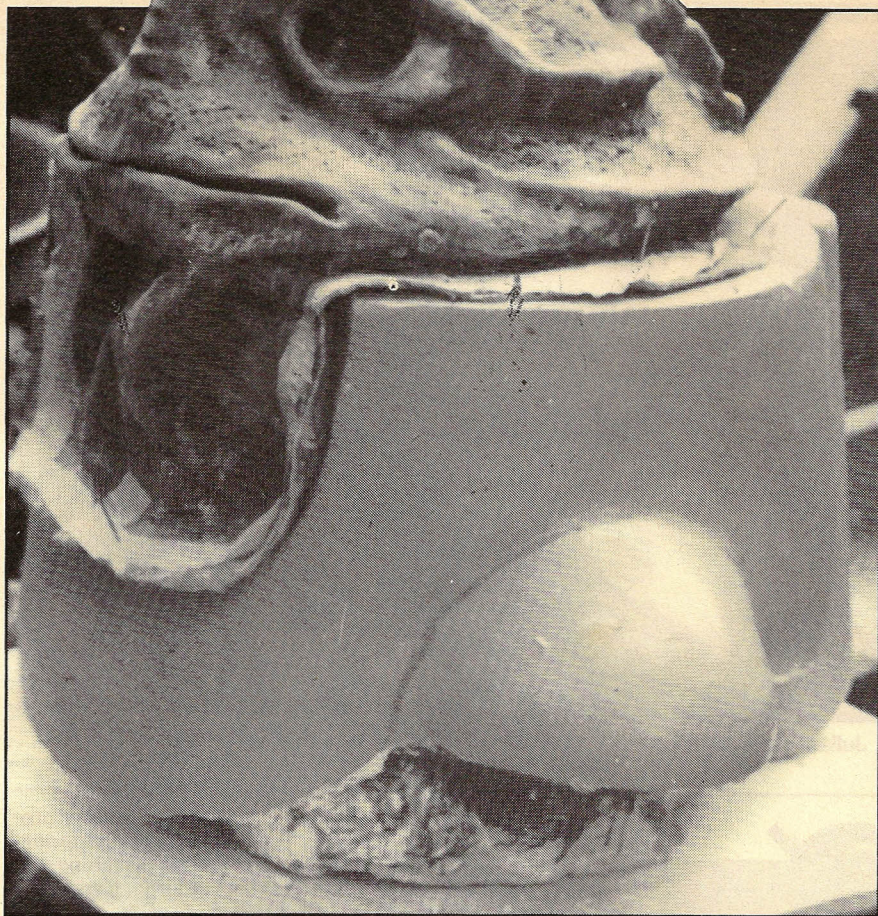
All these different movements must have taken quite a lot of mechanics. How were they done? 'Oh, all very much on a budget,' says Julian with a grin. 'We've always got to be thinking about money, so there aren't any motors or anything like that. It's all done with strings, and tubes to blow in, and things like that. Everything in that sense is very much back to basics.'

How much work has had to be done? 'An awful lot', continues Julian. 'I've had to make the Daleks and the Tardis in three different sizes. Eight inch Daleks for model sets, two feet ones, and six feet ones for when they are to appear with people. Most of the model work was done in a hut in Epsom, which was in the grounds of my art college. I had to use it for about a year, and it was an absolute godsend. I was able to use it to build sets and to shoot film. I did most of the model work on a table top, so that the operators of the models could get underneath and operate them by hand. This wasn't very popular work among my friends.

'I came up against quite a few problems on the way. For instance, we've developed these machines in which the Daleks can fly. I tried for ages to set up a sort of track that I could get them to go down while flying, but it never really worked. In the end I borrowed a supermarket trolley, put them on a plank of wood and pushed them past the camera. That was quite adequate, and since we're going to transfer the whole thing onto video in the end, I can always edit the edges of the picture where the trolley shows.'

INSPIRATION

Paul is the man who is going to follow in a long line of other actors, and actually play the Doctor. How does he feel about that? 'I want to create my own Doctor. Obviously I'll look to the others for inspiration, and in fact the costume we've designed (which was done by a friend of mine who's designed stage clothes for Gary Numan) includes elements of all the Doctors. I've always wanted to be the Doctor, and face the Daleks. I remember a play the BBC did in the sixties, about a little boy who dreamt that his bedroom was full of them, and he became the Doctor and fought them. That's my dream too, and in a way it's coming true for me. The Daleks are very important to me. I used to be terrified of them when I was a child. Whenever I was ill, my mother used to buy me little plastic ones made in Hong Kong or somewhere, and they smelt vile. They used to make me feel worse, so this probably added to the importance



The Korven in a half completed state. Julian and Paul worked out his construction from the beginning.

they've always held for me. And then later, I used to illustrate Doctor Who children's books. Then I met Julian at a Doctor Who convention, so all in all, it's been a very large part of my life.

'In that sense, it's a bit frightening, playing the Doctor. I love all the Doctors there have been — Jon Pertwee is the first I really remember, but I've seen recordings of William Hartnell, and there isn't one I'd want to criticise, except perhaps for Tom Baker in some episodes. I'm not going to do what Jon Pertwee did, and play him as myself. Jon's a very colourful and perhaps eccentric character, and I'm all shy and retiring. But we'll just see what happens.'

LIVE-ACTION

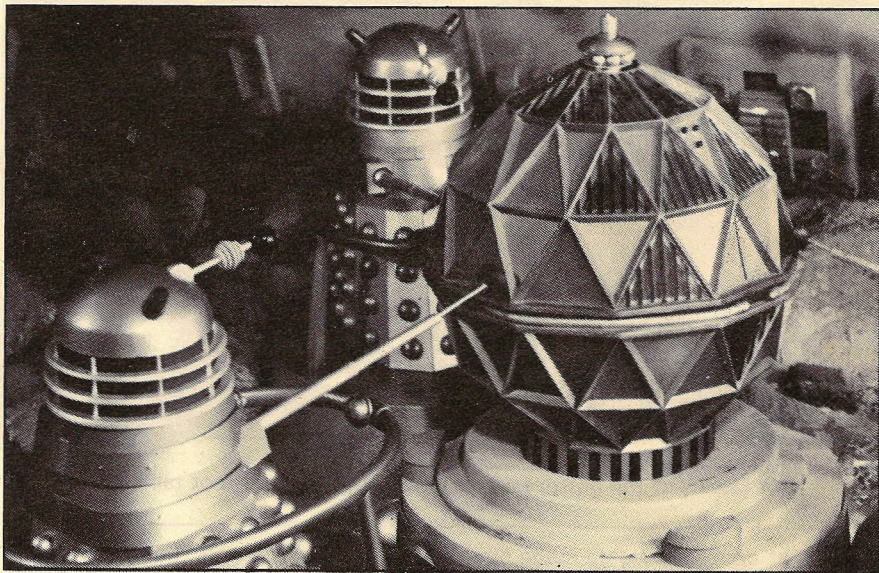
As you might have gathered, the live-action parts of the film have not yet been shot. The last five years have been spent with model work and planning. 'We've had to put a great deal of forethought into it,' continues Paul. 'We tried lots of script ideas before we came up with the one we were happy with. And then there's casting. We had to be absolutely sure that the people we got would be absolutely committed. We got through four different

when we first started, I was 19. When we get around to filming, I'll be 25, a far more suitable age for a 600-year-old Time Lord!'

STORYBOARD

'We've now got the whole film on a storyboard,' adds Julian, 'so I know exactly where to shoot what to the best financial effect. We will very soon be ready to just go and perhaps do all the live-action shooting in one weekend, doing it all back to back. Everything else will be sorted out later at the editing stage.'

How much help are they getting in making the film? 'Well,' says Julian, 'it's been great in that we've been able to pool our talents. And as we've gone on, lots of people have got interested.' 'Yes,' adds Paul, 'the Doctor Who Appreciation Society is very much a social thing, and a lot of the people involved are in the performance arts. So we've got professional help with clothes design, make-up (which I see as a very important part of the whole thing), music, editing (which we're going to do on high-band U-matic video). We've even got studio time at a reduced rate. But all this doesn't lessen Julian's involvement in it. In a lot of ways this is to be a showcase for his talents, in that some people who made *The Image Makers* with us have gone on to be professionals.'



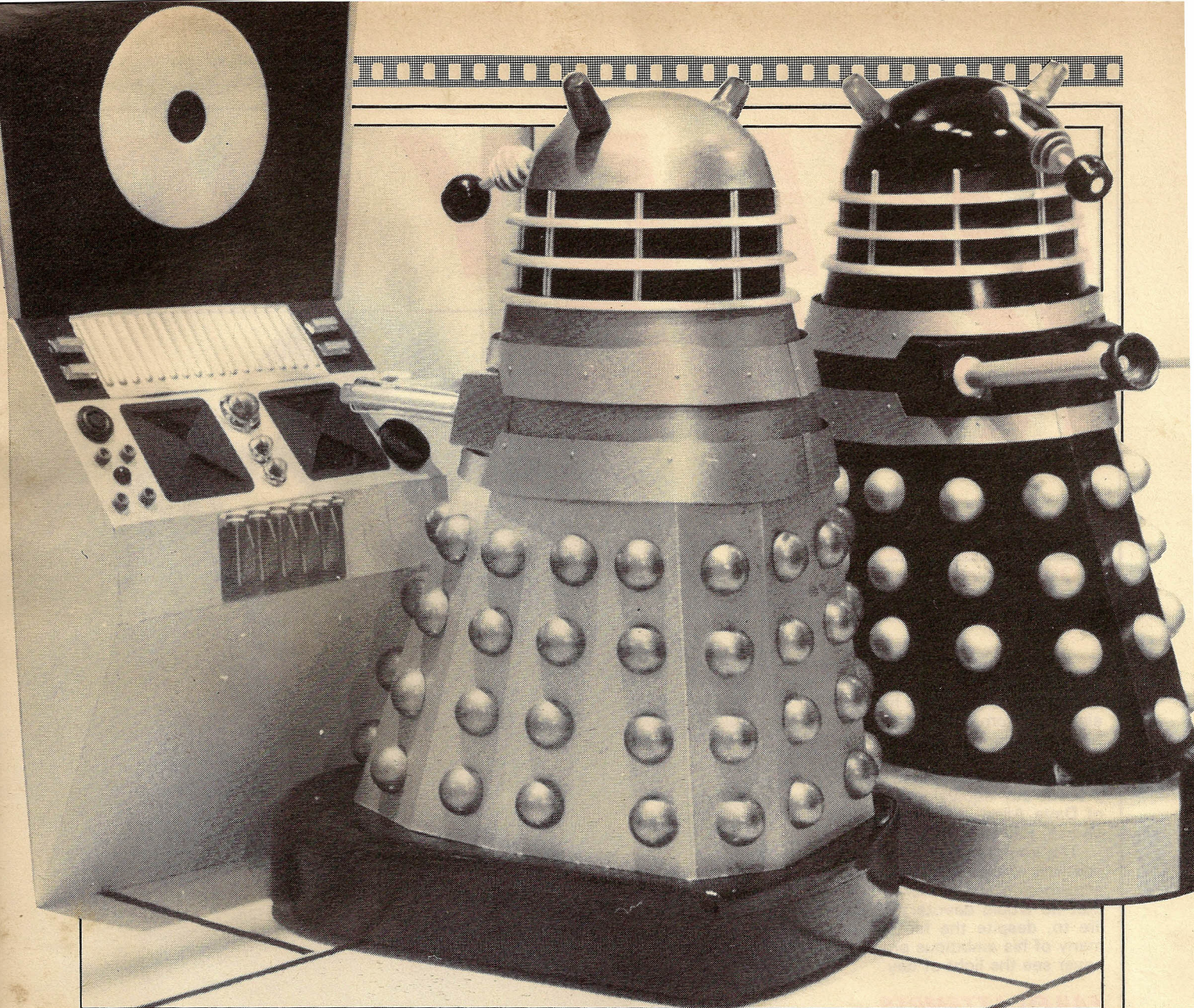
The parts of Dr Kathia Kemp and the Daleks are as yet to be announced. Dr Who © BBCTV, Daleks © BBCTV/Terry Nation All photos copyright.

girls for the part of Amber, the assistant, before we found the right one, who's an old college friend of Julian's'. 'Yes, and I asked her four years ago' says Julian. 'She's been waiting ever since.'

'There are' continues Paul, 'many advantages to taking this long in making a film. We've been rehearsing for a year now, so we've got all our parts off pat. This will save money in film stock and studio time when we start shooting the live-action stuff. Also,

ALL GROWN

'Yes,' says Julian. 'I can't believe how it's all grown. When I started I was just the props man, but as people have dropped out, I've become director, producer, cameraman, the lot. It's been while making it that my interest in film has really developed, and I'm very glad it happened. When I was at art college, I was interested in everything — fine arts, graphics,



The Scientist Dalek helps out the Black Dalek in the lab aboard their flying saucer.

sculpture, the lot, but I couldn't see how I could continue to do a bit of everything in a career. But with this I've been doing all that and more. And it's not just that I've become involved in film that's important there — it's the subject matter as well. If we'd been doing a war film, I'd have been limited to quite a narrow field. But with *Doctor Who*, anything goes. The only limitation is my imagination.

'And the other great thing about the subject matter, is that we have a free hand with the Doctor as well. We can include everything on this film that we'd like to see in the perfect episode of the BBC's *Doctor Who*. We can pick the monsters — I might do a sequel with the Ortons — so in a way it's a kind of wish-fulfilment.'

DIFFICULTIES

Has using this subject matter led to any major copyright difficulties? 'Well,' says Paul, 'it could have done if we'd handled it differently. We had to convince Terry Nation's agent that what we were doing would be good

enough not to bring the series into disrepute. And we've had to promise that film will not be shown outside the Doctor Who Appreciation Society. The only copies there will be, will be just mine and Julian's. And we're not going to do any marketing of the film itself. That's not to say that we're not going to try to recoup some of the money we've laid out. For instance, we're offering for sale some A4-size prints mounted on card, and I'm thinking about releasing the theme music, which has nothing to do with the actual Dr Who theme, on a seven inch single. These things are to be on sale only within the DWAS, and the money will be ploughed back into the film.'

PROFESSIONAL

It really sounds as though the whole project has been undertaken with a thoroughly professional approach. 'That's the whole idea', says Paul. 'We want to make a thoroughly professional movie — indistinguishable from a professional movie — but as amateurs, and on an amateur budget.

We see no reason why, in terms of quality, this film should be any different as far as production values are concerned, from the two full-length *Doctor Who* films that Milton Subotsky made in the sixties, with Peter Cushing as the Doctor.'

'In a way,' adds Julian, 'we see this as a third of a trilogy. Subotsky had the option to make a third one, and we've made what he might have done if he'd taken up the option. The main thing that I've learnt through all this, is that if you really want to do something, there's no reason why you shouldn't. I don't know how many times people have told me that something's impossible, but every time I've managed to do it in the end. We've got our own standards to live up to now, which over the years have got higher and higher, and there is now no way that we'll settle for anything less than the best we can do. All you've got to do to get something right is to work at it and work at it.'

And that is the lesson that even the least ambitious film maker ought to remember every minute of the day. ■